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2007-08 IOWA CONFERENCE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL PREVIEW

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA . . . Simpson College collected six of nine first-places votes to capture the top spot in the 2007-08 IIAC Women's Basketball Coaches' Poll, edging defending Iowa Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (IIAC) women's basketball Champion, Luther College, by a 70-67 margin. The Norse received the three remaining first-place votes.

Loras College and Wartburg College are tied for third in the Poll with 50 points, just ahead of Buena Vista University with 48 points. The complete 2007-08 IIAC Women's Basketball Coaches' Poll follows.

Rank	School (1st place votes)	Points	2006-07 Record
1	Simpson (6)	70	23-7, 12-4 IIAC
2	Luther (3)	67	24-5, 15-1 IIAC
3	Loras	50	17-10, 12-4 IIAC
	Wartburg	50	13-13, 8-8 IIAC
5	Buena Vista	48	17-10, 9-7 IIAC
6	Coe	42	8-18, 6-10 IIAC
7	Central	28	6-19, 4-12 IIAC
8	Dubuque	24	9-16, 3-13 IIAC
9	Cornell	17	8-17, 3-13 IIAC

Preseason Polls: Luther is ranked ninth by the Women's Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA), 12th by d3hoops.com and 14th by Women's DIII News. Simpson is ranked 16th by d3hoops.com and 18th by the WBCA in their respective preseason polls.

New Coaches: The University of Dubuque and Loras College each have new coaches patrolling the sidelines. **Mark Noll**, who spent the last five seasons as an assistant at University of Wisconsin-Stout, replaces **Todd Huffman** at Dubuque. UW-Stout has reached the "Sweet 16" of the NCAA Division III Tournament twice in recent years.

Justin Heinzen, an assistant coach at Division III Lakeland College the past two seasons, replaces **Shauna Green** at Loras. A 2004 graduate of Wisconsin Lutheran College, Heinzen also assisted at UW-Manitowoc, where he was part of a Blue Devils staff that won WJCAA Regional and State Championships.

Team-By-Team Preview: A brief preview for each Iowa Conference team follows.

Buena Vista returns four starters and eight letterwinners from last season's 17-10 team that finished fourth in the Conference with a 9-7 record. Sophomore guard **Margo Muhlbauer** started only one of the Beavers' 27 games last season but finished second in the Conference in scoring with a 15.6 point per game average and was tabbed as a First Team All-Conference selection. She also averaged 3.8 rebounds and 0.78 assists per game, and ranked eighth in the IIAC with a .476 field goal percentage. Senior **Jenni Schweitzberger** and junior **Jenn Schumann** will be asked to hold down the Buena Vista frontcourt this season. Schweitzberger started all 27 games last season, averaging 7.1 points, 4.0 rebounds, and 0.63 assists per game. Schumann averaged 5.2 points and 3.4 rebounds per game off the bench last season, but ranked fifth in the Conference with a .486 field goal percentage and seventh with 0.92 blocks per game.

Buena Vista head coach **Janet Berry** says, "The IIAC is very tough from top-to-bottom. I think it will be a very competitive race. We return several letterwinners and feel we have some freshmen that will contribute this season. Overall, we are very excited about the season."

Central returns three starters and eight letterwinners from last season's 6-19 team that finished seventh in the Conference with a 4-12 record. The Dutch went 6-5 at home or on a neutral court last year but were winless in 14 road contests. Central led the IIAC in three-point field goals made with an average of 7.68 per game behind the outside shooting of **Laura Porter** and **Emily DeJong**. Porter, a First Team All-Conference selection at guard in 2007, ranked second in the Conference in assists (4.28 per game), fourth in scoring (15.2 points per game) and free throw percentage (.802), seventh in steals (1.72 per game) and 11th in field goal percentage (.434) last season. DeJong averaged 9.4 points and 6.2 rebounds per game as a sophomore, ranking 20th in the IIAC in scoring, ninth in rebounds, and fifth in three-point field goal percentage (37.2 percent). Junior forward **Erin Benson** averaged 7.6 points and 4.7 rebounds in 23 games last season and should be a key figure in the Dutch frontcourt.

Central head coach **Natalie Nakic** says, "We have a lot of new faces in the program. We'll be relying on some young players to contribute early."

Coe returns three starters and four letterwinners from last season's 8-18 team that finished sixth in the Conference with a 6-10 record. With three starters and three of their top-four scorers back from a year ago, they hope to move up the ladder. Guard/forward **Amber Karkosh**, a First Team All-Conference performer each of the past two seasons, returns after averaging 14.9 points, 9.5 rebounds, 2.8 steals, and 2.2 assists per game. The IIAC leader in rebounding, Karkosh was also second in the Conference in steals, fifth in scoring, 10th in assists, 11th in free throw percentage (73.3 percent) and 14th in field goal percentage (41.8 percent). Forward/center **Shanon Nelson** averaged 12.6 points and 7.6 rebounds in 23 starts last season, ranking second on the team in both categories. She ranked fifth in the Conference in rebounding, sixth in field goal percentage (48.5 percent), 11th in scoring, and 14th in free throw percentage (70.5 percent).

Coe head coach **Randi Peterson** says, "We have a lot of new faces at Coe. If we can bridge the gap between upperclassmen and first-years, we will be very competitive in the IIAC this year."

Cornell returns two starters and eight letterwinners from last season's 8-17 team that finished tied for eighth in the Conference with a 3-13 record. The Rams return their top two scorers and top two rebounders from last season. Forward **Tiffany Cowan** averaged 12.5 points, 7.8 rebounds, 2.2 steals and shot 79.4 percent from the free-throw line, all team-highs. She ranked 12th in the Conference in scoring, third in rebounding and steals, fifth in free throw percentage, and ninth in three-point field goal percentage (35.3 percent) and blocked shots (0.72 per game). Guard **Val Marean** averaged 9.8 points and 2.2 rebounds per game and was Cornell's best deep threat with 50 three-point field goals last season. Marean also ranked second on the team with a 77.6 percent free throw percentage. She was also 19th in the Conference in scoring and tied for seventh in three-point field goals made (2.0 per game). Point guard Bree Wallace averaged a team-high 2.8 assists per game but played in only the first 12 games.

Cornell head coach **Brent Brase** says, "[We are] working hard to instill the culture, work ethic and team chemistry necessary for sustained success."

Dubuque returns three starters and seven letterwinners from last season's 9-16 team that finished tied for eighth in the Conference with a 3-13 record. The Spartans will be led by point guard **Courtney Musser**, a three-time All-Conference selection. She led the IIAC last year with 6.00 assists per game, was 12th in free throw percentage (71.4 percent) and 13th in steals with 1.56 per game. Forward **Jennifer Nichols** led the Spartans in scoring last season at 14.9 points per game, ranking sixth in the IIAC, while leading the Conference in free throw percentage (85.3 percent). She also ranked sixth in the league with a 36.5 percent three-point field goal percentage. Forward **Jennifer Bell** scored only 5.6 per game last season, but led the team with a 47.9 percent field goal percentage and averages of 6.6 rebounds and 1.2 steals per game. She ranked sixth in the Conference in rebounds per game.

Dubuque head coach **Mark Noll** says, "The 2007-08 Spartans will be very young with only two upperclassmen on the team. We may lack experience, but we will make up for it with determination and hustle every time we step on the court. We look forward to competing in the IIAC, knowing that every team will be very competitive this season.

Loras returns two starters and nine letterwinners from last season's 17-10 team that finished tied for second in the Conference with a 12-4 record. All-Conference guard **Natalie Pucci** leads the Duhawks into the 2007-08 season after finishing 2006-07 as the third-leading scorer in the IIAC. Pucci also ranked among the league leaders in free throw percentage (3rd, 80.4 percent), three-point field goal percentage (3rd, 38.3 percent), and steals (8th, 1.70/game). Center **Mindy Meyer** led the Iowa Conference in field goal percentage (59.7 percent) and was third in blocked shots (1.30/game) while averaging 7.7 points and 4.3 rebounds per game. Shooting guard **Lindsay Bava** averaged 7.1 points and led the team in three-point field goal percentage (39.0 percent).

Loras head coach **Justin Heinzen** says, "This is a young, spirited, and highly talented group that carries with them high expectations and common goals. Those traits share qualities that can make a team dangerous. I am impressed at how committed each individual is to winning and am excited to build on the recent success that Coach Shauna Green has had with a group of student-athletes like the one we have.

Luther returns four starters and seven letterwinners from last season's 24-5 team that captured its seventh Conference title with a 15-1 record, won the IIAC Tournament and advanced to the Third Round of the NCAA Tournament. The Norse return three All-Conference players to their lineup from last year's squad that ranked 13th in scoring defense (51.7 points/game) and 14th in field goal percentage (44.8 percent). Reigning Iowa Conference MVP **Blair Ernst** led the team in scoring at 13.7 points per game, a mark that also ranked ninth in the IIAC. Ernst also averaged 6.5 rebounds and 1.6 assists per game from her forward position, ranking sixth in the league in free throws. Forward **Ashley TeKippe** averaged 9.9 points, 7.9 rebounds, 2.8 blocks and 1.5 assists per game last season. She ranked 15th in the IIAC in scoring, second in rebounds and blocks and ninth in field goal percentage (46.3 percent). Guard **Danielle Dunnwald** averaged only 4.6 points per game last season, but contributed in many other facets of the game. Dunnwald also averaged 4.4 rebounds, 2.04 assists, 4.0 steals, and 0.6 blocked shots. She ranked led the league in steals and finished in the top-15 of both assists (14th) and blocked shots (12th).

Luther head coach **Jane Hildebrand** says, "We are excited about the upcoming season and are hoping to build on last year's finish. I believe the Iowa Conference will be stronger than it has been in many years. It will be a battle from top to bottom throughout the season."

Simpson returns four starters and nine letterwinners from last season's 23-7 team that tied for second in the Conference with a 12-4 record and advanced to the Third Round of the NCAA Tournament for the first time in school history. The Storm's efforts this season will be revolve around a trio of seniors who received All-Conference honors last season. Forward **Katelyn Whiton**, a First Team All-IIAC selection and honorable mention WBCA/Kodak All-American, averaged 15.7 points per game and was the league's leading scorer. Whiton finished 18th in Division III in field goal percentage. Center **Ashley Katch**, a Second Team selection, led all of NCAA women's basketball in blocked shots with a 5.1 per game average last season. She also led Simpson in rebounding (7.7 rebounds/game) and was fourth in scoring (8.3 points/game). Guard **Carlie Beals**, also a Second Team selection, was second on the team in scoring at 10.2 points per game. Beals also led the Iowa Conference in made three-pointers (2.43/game) and finished 11th in Division III in three-point field goal percentage (42.9 percent) and 28th in three-point field goals made (2.4/game).

Simpson head coach **Brian Niemuth** says, "Again, this should be another exciting year with anyone able to win on any night. Last year, the conference showed how strong it is top-to-bottom with the post-season results. I am proud to be a part of this conference. Our team returns good experience and we have added to our depth. We are looking forward to the challenges ahead of us."

Wartburg returns three starters and nine letterwinners from last season's 13-13 team that finished fifth in the Conference with a 8-8 record. The Knights will be led by two-time All-Conference forward **Elizabeth Campbell** and post players **Sharese Van Sloten** and **Megan Hendricks**. Campbell was Wartburg's leading scorer (13.9/game) and second-leading rebounder (5.8/game) while also finishing third on the team in both assists (56) and steals (30). She ranked fourth in the IIAC in three-point field goal percentage (37.5 percent), eighth in the IIAC in scoring, 10th in rebounding, and 12th in field goal percentage (42.9 percent) and assists (2.15/game). Van Sloten averaged 9.8 points and a team-high 6.3 rebounds per game, ranking eighth and 16th in the Conference, respectively. Hendricks was the Knights' fourth-leading scorer (7.0/game) and third-leading rebounder (5.0/game).

Wartburg head coach **Bob Amsberry** says, "I believe the Iowa Conference may be as strong top-to-bottom as it has been in quite some time and we will be challenged every night. We will feature more depth this season, but will be very young overall. Leadership is critical to our success this year, as several first-year players are expected to contribute."